THE HALF CENT U.S. LIBERTY SERIES STAMP USED ON THIRD CLASS MAIL

The United States Post Office Department issued the half cent stamp in the Liberty Series on October 20, 1955, primarily for use in making up postal rates on third class mail. This exhibit looks at such usages.

In 1955, third class mail was a domestic classification for merchandise or miscellaneous printed matter weighing up to 8 ounces. On August 1, 1958, that weight limited increased up to, but not including, 16 ounces. Heavier pieces were classified as fourth class mail. During the period of this exhibit, there were two major subclasses of third class mail, single piece and bulk rate.

On single piece third class mail, the postage for each piece of mail was calculated separately. On bulk rate third class mail, the postage for 200 or more pieces mailed at one time was based on the weight of the entire mailing. However, there was also a minimum rate per piece that had to be met. Certain nonprofit organizations were eligible for a lower bulk rate than other mailers. Any stamps or postal stationery used to pay a bulk rate had to be precanceled, and each piece of bulk rate mail had to bear the endorsement **BULK RATE** or **NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION**, or an abbreviation of the same.

There was no half cent rate during the time the Liberty Series was in use, nor for that matter at any time since the advent of U.S. adhesive postage stamps in 1847. Thus, the half cent value in the Liberty Series could not properly be used as a solo franking. The stamps could be and were used in the following three ways:

- Single value frankings, where multiples of the half cent stamp were used without any other postage.
- Single value uses on postal stationery, where one or more half cent stamps were the only *adhesive* stamps used on a piece of postal stationery.
- Multiple value frankings, where one or more half cent stamps were used in conjunction with other adhesive stamps on an ordinary cover or on a piece of postal stationery.

This exhibit is organized by these three ways the half cent Liberty Stamp could be used. Since this is a postal history exhibit, difference between the wet and dry printings are generally not indicated, unless to date an item. Precancellations, however, are identified as either Bureau (applied by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing at time of production) or local (applied by local post offices at a later time). Year dates are indicated when they can be determined by postal or nonpostal markings, dated contents, docketing, or other such evidence.

SINGLE VALUE FRANKINGS

Bulk Rate

In effect before 1955 through December 31, 1958: 11/2¢ minimum per piece.

Look magazine cover. Publisher often used multiples or combinations of lower value adhesive stamps in the hope of increasing the response rate.

11/2¢ rate. Bureau precancellations. No date.